



SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

The Concept of Evil in Our World

There has to be evil so that good can prove its purity above it.
- *Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta, founder of Buddhism*

No man chooses evil because it is evil; he only mistakes it for happiness, the good he seeks.

- *Mary Wollstonecraft*

Opening and Chalice Lighting

O Hidden Life vibrant in every atom;
O Hidden Light! Shining with every creature;
O Hidden Love! Embracing all in Oneness;
May each who feels himself as one with Thee,
Know he is also one with every other.
- *adapted from Annie Besant by Paulo Ereno
(Brazilian Unitarian Universalists, from ICUU.net)*

Quiet Reflection

Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening
when you'd have preferred to talk.
- *Doug Larson*

Sharing/ Check-In

Take two or three minutes to share how you are spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, and physically. You can speak or you can pass. We want to know how you are in this moment.

Topic Readings

The world is a dangerous place. Not because of people who are evil, but because of people who don't do anything about it.
- *Albert Einstein*

Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.
- *Blaise Pascal*

The belief that there is only one truth, and that oneself is in possession of it, is the root of all evil in the world.
- *Max Born*

If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being, and who is willing to destroy his own heart?
- *Alexander Solzhenitsyn*

There is an old illusion. It is called good and evil.
- *Friedrich Nietzsche*

We ought always to deal justly, not only with those who are just to us, but likewise to those who endeavor to injure us; and this, for fear lest by rendering them evil for evil, we should fall into the same vice.
- *Hierocles*

The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil.
- *Hannah Arendt*

Little by little a person becomes evil, as a water pot is filled by drops of water... Little by little a person becomes good, as a water pot is filled by drops of water.
- *Buddha*

It's difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart. – *Anne Frank*

Listening

Listen to the audio clip from the Rev. Greg Stewart's sermon "Justice or Just Us?"

Break/Quiet Contemplation

Sharing/Deep Listening

Speak about this topic in any way that is comfortable to you. If you choose to use the questions, focus on just one or two, as this will allow you to go deeper into the topic.

- In the sermon, Rev. Stewart talks about humanity's innate goodness, stating "all are good, therefore all are just." Many religious and philosophical traditions believe that the true nature of humanity is good, and that evil is an aberration (i.e. "the fall of man"). What do you believe? If we are inherently good, what makes people do evil things?
- Are there truly evil people in this world or only evil acts and behaviors? Can you separate the person from the behavior? How does your concept of evil affect how you feel about our first principle, to "affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person"?
- Consider the symbolic objects on the table. You may immediately identify certain objects as representative of good or evil. How have your life experiences shaped your perceptions of these objects? How might others perceive these objects differently than you, based on different life experiences? What does this say about the relative nature of good and evil?
- Are there absolute evils? Any acts or deeds that can universally be considered wrong for *all* people? What does it take for an act to be evil? Can people accidentally commit evil acts or does there need to be intention?
- How do we, as individuals and as a culture, continue to try and live happy, productive lives in the presence of evil? Do we try?

Discussion

This is a time to supportively respond to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

**Checkout/
Likes & Wishes**

What did you like about this meeting? What would you like to see change at future meetings?

Announcements**Closing Reading/
Extinguish Chalice**

When despair for the world grows in me, and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's life may be, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

- Wendell Berry